

Pesticides in Forestry

Issue:

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Background:

In EPA and NOAA's 1/13/1998 and 12/20/2013 rationales, the agencies concluded that one of the areas that needed to be addressed in the additional forestry management measures to attain and maintain water quality standards and support beneficial use was the lack of adequate stream buffers from aerial application of herbicides on non-fish bearing streams. In the coastal nonpoint management area, non-fish bearing streams comprise 60-70% of the total stream length. Oregon also does not require riparian buffers for forest harvests on non-fish bearing streams, so trees can be harvested up to the stream banks along non-fish bearing streams. Herbicides applied aerially can enter into these streams which then enter fish-bearing streams or drinking water supplies, potentially impacting designated uses such as drinking water and salmon habitat, including for endangered and threatened coastal coho and other salmonids.

For aerial application of herbicides on small non-fish bearing streams, Oregon's coastal nonpoint program relies on the State's Pesticide Control Law at ORS 634, OAR 603-57, best management practices set by the ODA, and FIFRA.

The main challenges with Oregon's program in how it manages aerial application of herbicides are:

- 1) The State's Forest Practices Act has protections for aerial application of herbicides on fish-bearing streams and drinking water streams. However, there are none for Type N streams where aerial application of herbicides occur. In contrast, Washington requires a 50-foot buffer on non-fish bearing streams.
- 2) There are no riparian buffers for harvesting on Type N streams under Oregon's Forest Practices Act.

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- 6) Based on public comments, aerial application of herbicides on Type N streams may be occurring regularly on forested areas even in instances that FIFRA labels prohibit application to waters.

The comments we received were inconclusive. There were no studies or data on herbicides in non-fish bearing streams in the coastal nonpoint management area. The State also did not offer any new information on policies to protect Type N streams from aerial application of herbicides.

Impact or significance of the issue

Type N streams compose 60-70% of the stream length in the coastal nonpoint management area. There are no required buffers for forest harvests on Type N streams, and in some areas, trees can be harvested up to the stream banks, and herbicides applied aerially can be delivered directly into streams which then enter fish-bearing streams where aquatic life can be harmed. These all eventually flow into fish-bearing streams where listed coastal coho and other fish species live.

Tangentially, local citizens, environmental groups, state agencies, and industry will scrutinize our decision carefully because of ongoing concerns with public health exposure concerns from aerial drift of herbicides in the Triangle Lake area. Also, there continues to be litigation in pesticides on labeling requirements and ESA species and a separate long-term multi-agency workgroup that is attempting to address those issues.

Constraints

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Who is impacted by the issue?

- Aquatic life and/or local landowners adjacent to areas where aerial application of herbicides occur
- EPA Pesticides Program and NMFS working on pesticide risk assessments and litigation

What are the risks of not resolving the issue?

We must take a final action by January 30, 2015 as agreed upon with NWEA.

Recommendations and Next Steps

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